

Statement of Significance

Yukon Telegraph Trail



Description

The Yukon Telegraph Trail extends through British Columbia from Ashcroft in the south to Atlin in the north. The portion of the trail located in the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine is approximately 500 kilometres long, extending from Moricetown near Hazelton to the village of Telegraph Creek. The trail, overgrown in places, contains the remains of telegraph cabins, wire, and other artifacts related to the construction of the Dominion Telegraph Line.

The historic place consists of the length and width of the trail route from Moricetown to Telegraph Creek.

Heritage Values

Almost 3,000 kilometres in length, the Yukon Telegraph line linked Dawson City to southern Canada. The line branched north from the Canadian Pacific Railway telegraph line at Ashcroft; along much of its length was a trail used for servicing the line. Within the Kitimat-Stikine region, the Yukon Telegraph Trail is valued for its historical association with the Collins Overland and Yukon Telegraph lines, its role in communications and transportation, its scientific association with the changes in communications technology, its cultural association with First Nations, telegraph operators and others, its current use by guide outfitters, its potential as a recreational resource, and its location within the pristine natural environment of the Kitimat-Stikine region.

The 500 kilometre portion of the Yukon Telegraph Trail that extends from Moricetown to Telegraph Creek is valued as a physical reminder of the history of the Yukon Telegraph line. Begun during the Yukon Gold Rush and constructed between 1897 and 1901 by the Dominion Government Telegraph Service, the trail along with the Teslin trail was promoted as an All-Canadian Route to the Yukon gold fields. The trail is also valued for the critical role it played in maintaining communications and opening up settlement in the remote Kitimat-Stikine region. The trail highlights the transportation challenges in the region, as pack trains were the only

possible means for transporting goods along the line.

There are cultural, social and architectural values associated with the Yukon Telegraph Trail through the lives of the men who patrolled the trail and maintained the line. Along the line each main log cabin housed two men. North of Hazelton the main cabins were numbered 1 to 9 followed by 2 or 3 other named cabins leading to Telegraph Creek. Smaller 'refuge' cabins were located between them for use as emergency shelters. These log cabins are an integral, physical part of the Telegraph Trail's heritage value. Their presence represents the technical system of the telegraph that relied on human labour to keep it functioning, as well as the dedication of the workers, whose lives were both pragmatic and storied. While enduring extreme weather and harsh living conditions, the men played music, tended wilderness vegetable gardens and maintained traplines.

Cultural value is also found where the trail passes through First Nations traditional territory, where it was traditionally used as part of a network of trails for travel, trapping and the transport of goods such as oolichan grease from the coast. Also important is the trail's relationship to the village of Telegraph Creek, named for the Collins Overland Telegraph, that attempted to construct a telegraph line through the region in 1866. The use of the trail by many diverse people over time including First Nations, prospectors, trappers, packers and outlaws, adds to its social and cultural significance. All of these people left their traces and their stories along the Yukon Telegraph Trail.

The Yukon Telegraph Trail is valued for its direct association with the Telegraph Line and its scientific and engineering feats, which included the physical construction of the trail and telegraph line through difficult terrain, developments in communications technology of the time, and the physical presence of a continuous wire through the wilderness.

Although the telegraph line was abandoned in 1936 with the advent of radio communication, the historical value of the line and trail is reflected in many place names associated with the telegraph survey, construction and operation, including Telegraph Creek, Bob Quinn Lake, Durham Creek and Burrage Creek. The trail is significant as a historic recreational trail, for its pristine and aesthetic environment, as the subject of ongoing historical research, and for its power to evoke a sense of nostalgia for the pioneering construction of early telegraph routes in B.C.

Character Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Telegraph Trail include:

Site and Setting

- Remote location
- Extent of the trail from Moricetown to Telegraph Creek
- The extent and variety of wilderness (mountains, rivers, lakes, ecosystems, wildlife) through which the trail passes
- The remote communities through which the trail passes

Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine Heritage Register 2009
Yukon Telegraph Trail Statement of Significance

- The overgrown but continuous nature of the trail
- The rugged trail surface
- Views to and from the trail

Architectural and Small-scale Features

- Collection of log-constructed telegraph cabins in various states of repair, located at regular intervals along the trail
- Memories and stories associated with the trail
- Artifacts including wire, insulators, posts, signs, markers, culturally modified trees, blazes, fences, walls, bridges and other elements related to the trail and to the operation of the telegraph line



Remains of a Yukon Telegraph line refuge cabin near Bell II (2009)

Selected Sources

Ball, Georgiana (1983). *An Overview of the History of the Stikine/Cassiar Region up to 1930, Volume 1*. Victoria: Planning, Research and Interpretation Division, Heritage Conservation Branch.

Dennis, Alfred P. (1899). "Life on a Yukon Trail", *National Geographic Magazine*, Volume X, No. 10, October 1899.

Huurdeman, Anton A. (2003). *The Worldwide History of Telecommunications*.

A Map to Accompany the Report of the Minister of Mines for 1912. Victoria: Bureau of Mines, British Columbia.

Miller, Bill (2004) *Wires in the Wilderness, the Story of the Yukon Telegraph*. Heritage House Publishing.

Newman, Ken (1995). *The Yukon Telegraph Trail/Line in the Kalum Forest District*. Unpublished manuscript.

Robb, Stewart Andrew (1966). *The Collins Overland or Russian Extension Telegraph Project*. Unpublished masters thesis, Simon Fraser University.



Fourth cabin on Telegraph line, 1911.
BC Archives photo a-05356






Telegraph lineman Fred Applyard at Echo Lake, 1935
Yukon Archives, John Sutherland fonds, 82/200 #240



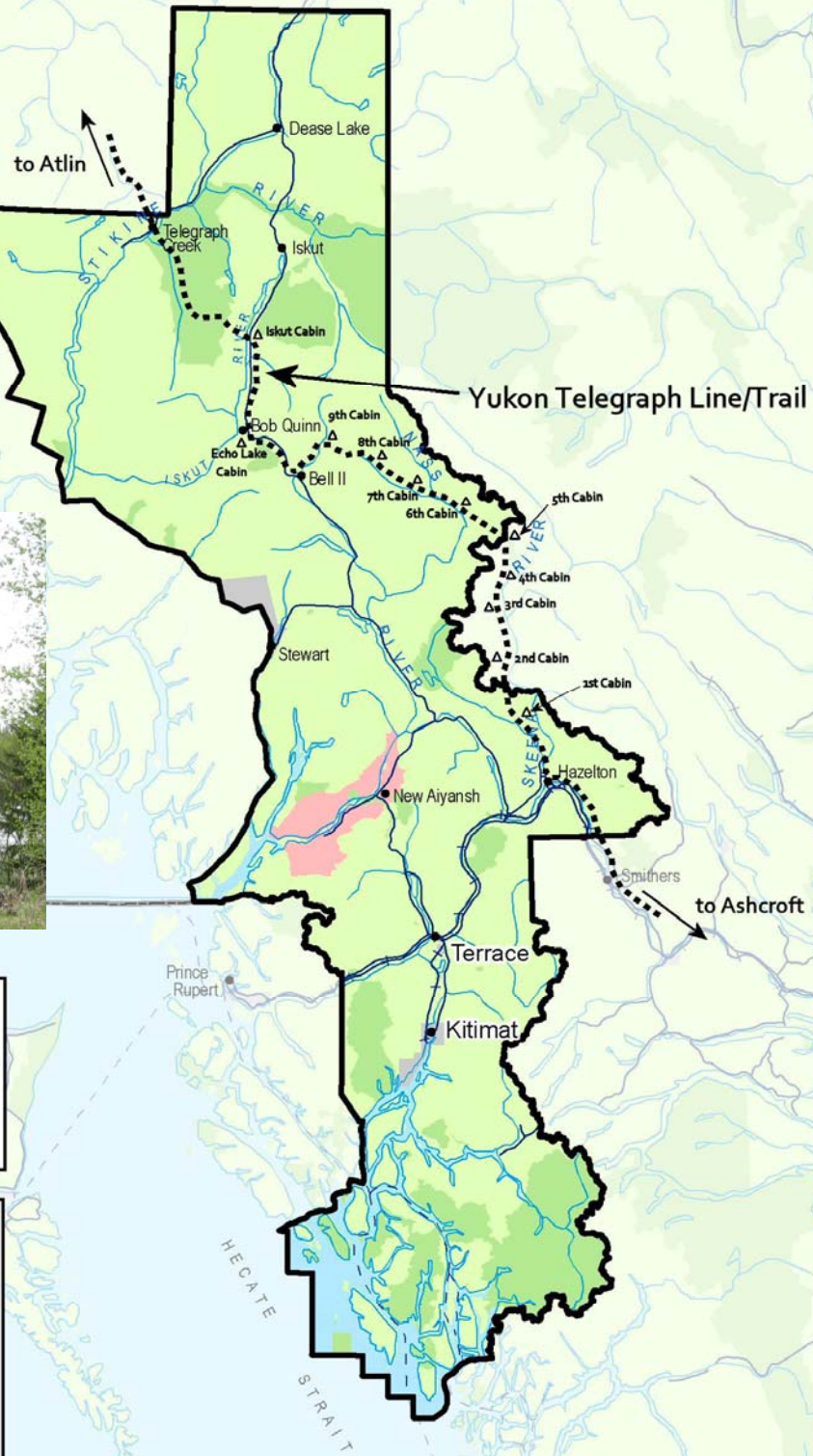
Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine

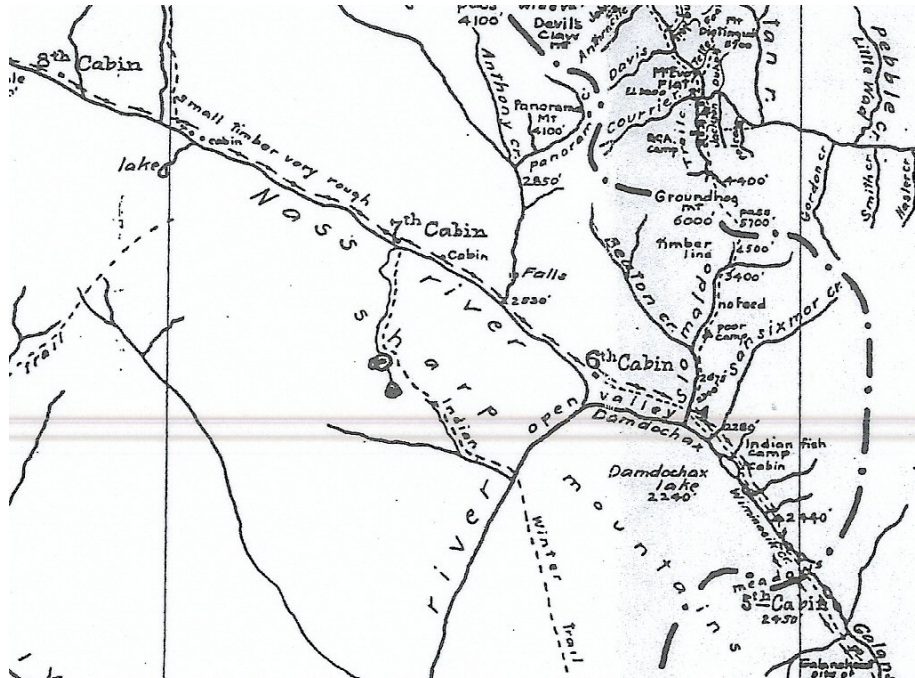


Legend

-  Parks and Protected Areas
-  Nisga'a Lands
-  Municipalities

British Columbia Regional Districts

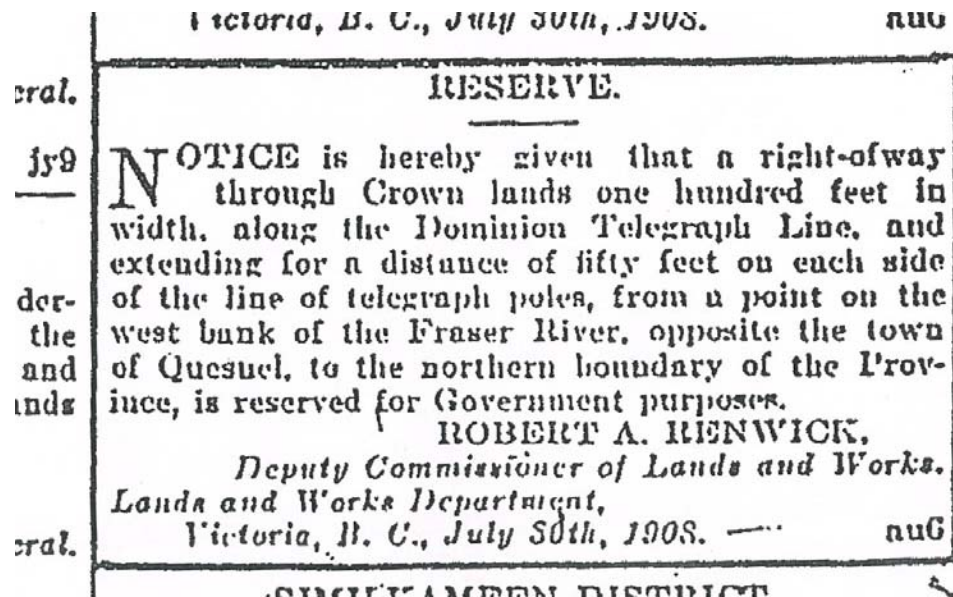




Excerpt from the Map of the Liard, Stikine and Skeena Mining Division showing the location of numbered Telegraph cabins and the Telegraph Line at mid-point between Hazelton and Telegraph Creek. From the *Report of the Minister of Mines 1912*.



Excerpt from the B.C. Dept. of Lands, Stikine River map of 1929 showing the Telegraph cabin locations and Telegraph Line route in the Iskut River Valley. BC Archives CM/C545



Excerpt from *The B.C. Gazette*, August 6th 1908, Notice of right-of way for the Telegraph Line from Quesnel to the north boundary of the Province.



Restored telegraph cabin near Damdochax Lake. (1995)
Photo courtesy Kalum Forest District



Tree blaze along the Trail. (1995)
Photo courtesy Kalum Forest District



Yukon Telegraph cut line through the forest in the Damdochax Valley (1995).

Photo courtesy Kalum Forest District



Aerial view of the remains of Telegraph Cabin No. 8. (1995)

Photo courtesy Kalum Forest District

Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine Heritage Register 2009
Yukon Telegraph Trail Statement of Significance



Pack train on the Yukon Telegraph Trail near Hazelton, 1909.
BC Archives photo i-33279.



Telegraph station at Raspberry Pass, 1936.
BC Archives photo g-07530.



Echo Lake Telegraph Station c. 1936
Yukon Archives, John Sutherland fonds, 82/200 #245



Telegraph line insulators found near Bob Quinn Lake (K. Newman photo 2004)



Remains of telegraph cabin at Echo Lake, May 2009.



Construction detail of telegraph cabin at Echo Lake, May 2009.



A repair splice in telegraph wire found near Bell II, May 2009.



Modified telegraph cabin near Snowbank Creek, May 2009.